

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

December 13, 2012

MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health
4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, MI 48910

Present for the Natural Resources Commission (NRC)

Tim Nichols, Chairman
Frank Wheatlake, Vice Chairman
John Madigan
John Matonich
JR Richardson
Rex Schlaybaugh
Annoesjka Steinman

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Keith Creagh, Director, Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Bill Moritz, DNR Deputy
Mark Hoffman, DNR Chief Administrative Officer
Dennis Knapp, DNR Chief of Staff
Pam Stevenson, Legal Counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Debbie Whipple, executive assistant to the NRC
Other Department staff

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Natural Resources Commission Chairman **Tim Nichols** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and immediately announced he was stepping down as chairman of the NRC due to personal and professional reasons. **Nichols** read a letter from Governor **Rick Snyder**, appointing Commissioner **J.R. Richardson** the new NRC chair. Nichols then ceremoniously passed the gavel to **Richardson** who continued on with the meeting.

Richardson thanked **Nichols** for the outstanding job he has done leading the NRC and called for a resolution from the department and commission to be presented at the January NRC meeting, thanking **Nichols** for his leadership.

Director Creagh also thanked Nichols for his leadership and his help in the very smooth transition when Creagh moved over to the DNR from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Grants News

Director **Creagh** gave a brief summary of grants that were awarded in 2012, reporting that over \$24.8 million was granted to 92 different communities across the state. He stated that 76 public outdoor recreation development and land acquisition grants totaling over \$23.5 million were recommended for funding by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board of Trustees. He said it was interesting to note that there were actually more dollars available for land acquisitions than there were requests. In addition, **Creagh** said 19 communities will share \$735,100 in Recreation Passport grants, and 7 communities will share close to \$545,000 in Land and Water Conservation funds.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries 2013 Calendar of Issues

Russ Mason, DNR Wildlife Division chief, advised commissioners that draft copies of the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries 2013 Calendar of Issues was in their packets for review. The calendar will be brought for adoption at the January 10, 2013, meeting.

Land Use Order of the Director Amendment No. 16 of 2012 Order to Regulate Use of Kirtland's Warbler Nesting Areas

Russ Mason, DNR Wildlife Division chief, advised that Land Use Order of the Director Amendment No. 16 of 2012, Order to Regulate Use of Kirtland's Warbler Nesting Areas, listed on the agenda for action will be held until the January 10, 2013, NRC meeting because some additional data has led the department to change the boundaries in the order.

Commissioner **Madigan** asked if the area currently restricted is being increased. **Mason** said yes, the restricted area will be a larger area. **Madigan** then asked how large the restricted area is and who, exactly, is restricted from entering the area. **Mason** answered that what is being restricted is folks going cross-country. As long as visitors stay on trails or roads, they can continue to go through the area as they always have. **Madigan** asked if the order would restrict ORV use in the area. **Mason** said as long as ORVs stay on trails or roads, the same restrictions that are already in place would apply. He continued that restrictions are not being modified; just the area of the restrictions is being increased. **Mason** said he will have the number of acres involved at the January NRC meeting.

Michigan Pheasant Habitat Restoration Initiative

DNR Wildlife Division Chief Russ Mason introduced **Ben Wickerham**, regional field representative of Pheasants Forever, a coordinator for the Michigan Pheasants Restoration Initiative, and **Steve Shine** from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development who gave an update on the partnership and substantial success of the initiative. A brief video was shown explaining the project. Examples of the work that has been done as well as what's planned for the future were highlighted.

Deer Season Update

Brent Rudolph, DNR Wildlife Division deer and elk program leader, gave a recap of the 2012 firearm deer season. He said license sales were up this year, and there were more deer checked this year than last. **Rudolph** gave statistics in specific areas of the state and said he didn't think the EHD die-off affected the season. He also reported that there was an 80 percent response to the 2012 Antler Point Restriction Survey and that 68.5 percent of hunters responding supported the proposal to change the regulation. A recommendation will be brought forth during the spring regulation cycle. **Rudolph** said the recommendation will be for a five-year trial period at the end of which the survey will be repeated to determine if the restriction should be retained.

Commissioner **Schlaybaugh** asked **Rudolph** to furnish the slides of his presentation to NRC board members.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Donna Stine gave an update on the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), a requirement by the federal government in order for Michigan to receive land and water conservation funds. She noted the deadline for submitting the plan is December 31, 2012. She said it was a year-long process, involving quite a bit of public review and input, including state-wide surveys of Michigan citizens and recreation providers. **Stine** said the department worked with Public Sector Consultants, Inc. to put the plan together. A report also was commissioned to help local units of government decide how to use recreation to assist in their local economic prosperity.

Comprehensive Trail Plan Update

Donna Stine gave an update on the Comprehensive Trail Plan which continues to be worked on. She provided commissioners with a draft of proposed recommendations and goals and said the plan should be approved for public review by March 2013. The plan also has to be approved by the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC) because it was originally its plan.

Land Management Plan

Donna Stine gave an update on the Land Management Plan and said it's a plan requested by **Governor Snyder** but will also meet the requirements of Public Act 240. **Stine** said the plan should be completed in the spring of 2013. It will include all things state land. A report will provide anything anyone wants to know about state land, such as when, how and where it was acquired, where PILT is paid, what's the value of timber and oil and gas, etc. An outline of the land management planning process was furnished to the commissioners.

Low Lake Level Concerns

Ron Olson, chief of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division, talked about water levels in the Great Lakes being down, and said the Army Corps of Engineers predicts that Great Lakes water levels will break their all-time low records in 2013. **Olson** said maintaining navigational lanes open through dredging is critical to the success of the recreational boating program and commercial success as well. **Olson** reported that **Governor Snyder** has charged the Michigan State Waterways Commission with developing a plan of action by mid-January, with recommendations that will result in a comprehensive request from Michigan to Congress for the release of funding for critical dredging projects.

Summer Youth Employment Program

Ron Olson, chief of the DNR Parks and Recreation Division gave an update on the Summer Youth Employment Initiative. He gave final numbers of youth taking part in Flint, Pontiac, Saginaw and Detroit, reporting that a grand total of 764 participants were enrolled. He also provided a brief overview of each agency that participated in providing youth ages 16-19 years old employment opportunities, work skills education and outdoor recreation experiences. **Olson** said the program was allocated \$2 million for FY12, and a total of \$1,770,387 was granted to 13 agencies. At the end of the program there was a balance of more than \$506,000 to be carried over for FY 13.

Dr. Grenae Dudley, chief executive officer of The Youth Connection, Inc., a nonprofit located in the city of Detroit, gave an overview of its successful experience with the program and partnership with the DNR.

Pure Michigan

Kristin Phillips, acting chief of the DNR Marketing and Outreach Division, reported that the DNR has been working with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to promote outdoor activities and initiatives, focusing on the level of importance of hunting and fishing as an economic and tourism driver in Michigan. This effort resulted in a Pure Michigan hunting and fishing marketing campaign. **Phillips** introduced **Kelly Wolgamott**, director of marketing and advertising at MEDC, who gave an overview of the marketing campaign.

NRC Policy Review

Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff, gave a brief explanation of a memorandum and resolution on NRC policy review. He noted that many of the policies date back to the 1970s when the department was both environmental and natural resources. **Knapp** said that the DNR Office of Legal Services has initiated a review of the policies and is working on recommendations to rescind some policies and revise others.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

DNR Legislative Liaison and Policy Advisor **Trevor VanDyke** gave a brief overview of his written legislative update on issues relating to the DNR. A copy of the report will be posted to the NRC website at www.michigan.gov/nrc.

Wolf Statement

Chairman **Richardson** read a statement regarding recent legislative changes that would make wolves a game animal in Michigan. He explained that levels of conflict between wolves and humans have increased as the wolf population has increased, and population management on a somewhat broader scale is being considered.

Richardson noted that if a bill delegating authority to create a hunt is signed into law, it will be the NRC's responsibility to develop a socially responsible framework for population management on a limited basis to resolve conflicts in specific areas. He asked the DNR Wildlife Division to bring an update on the issue to the January 10, 2013, NRC meeting, which should include the next steps in wolf management and recommended opportunities for public comment and government-to-government consultation with the Indian tribes if the legislation is signed into law.

Commissioner **Schlaybaugh** requested that the wolf management plans from Wisconsin and Minnesota be furnished to the NRC.

2012 Hunter Education Volunteer Instructor of the Year Award

Director **Creagh** introduced **Richard Woodbury** of Hart as the 2012 Hunter Education Volunteer Instructor of the Year. **Woodbury** has been volunteering his time and expertise to the program since 1997. **Creagh** said that **Woodbury** and his wife **Melissa** currently serve as local hunter education coordinators overseeing the program in Oceana County and are very active with recruiting new instructors and expanding the program throughout the county and are always willing to assist with other classes, not just their own, being held in their area. **Woodbury** was presented a white pine plaque.

Meijer Partners in Conservation Award

Director **Creagh** presented the department's Partners in Conservation award to **Meijer, Inc.** in recognition of **Meijer's** valuable contributions to Michigan's outdoors. **Creagh** said **Meijer** is a valuable partner with the DNR in efforts to keep the state's hunting and fishing heritage going strong and develop tomorrow's champions for the outdoors. **Bob Coffin**, hunting and marine buyer for **Meijer** in Grand Rapids, was on hand to accept a white pine plaque.

Presentation to Former DNR Director Rodney Stokes

The NRC members honored former DNR Director **Rodney Stokes** for his exceptional career and years of noble service to the DNR with a resolution, which was read by former chairman of the NRC, **Tim Nichols**. Stokes also was presented a custom made fishing rod from the NRC members

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PUBLIC APPEARANCES

(**Dennis Knapp** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances.)

John Knevel, president of Commemorative Bucks of Michigan (CBM), and **Terry Kemp**, one of the original founders of CBM and a long-time board member and volunteer, presented each commissioner and the DNR director with a complimentary copy of the 9th edition of the Big Game Records of Michigan book. They thanked the DNR for its ongoing support of CBM and recognized **Brent Rudolph** for writing the introductory articles for the deer and elk sections of the book, **Adam Bump** for the introductory article to the black bear section, and **Al Stewart** for the introductory article on the turkey section.

John Caretti, president of Michigan Trappers and Predator Callers Association, spoke on wolves and furbearer regulations.

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Chairman Richardson adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:20 p.m. and immediately called to order the regular meeting of the NRC. He noted that all commissioners present at the Committee of the Whole are present for the regular meeting of the NRC.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY – NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Chairman **Richardson** listed the NRC “for information only” item as NRC Policy Review Recommendations.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, November 8, 2012, NRC Meeting

Commissioner **Wheatlake** made a motion that the minutes of the October 11, 2012, NRC meeting be approved. Commissioner **Nichols** seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Bobcat Registration Requirements

Commissioner **Madigan** made a motion that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 16 of 2012, Bobcat Registration Requirements be approved. Commissioner **Schlaybaugh** supported the motion, and it carried unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Director Creagh announced that he will sign all Director's Action items with the exception of Land Use Order of the Director (LUOD) Amendment No. 14 of 2012, Order to Regulate Use of Kirtland's Warbler Nesting Areas, which will be held in abeyance at the request of the DNR Wildlife Division chief and so that Commissioner Madigan's questions can be answered. The LUOD will be brought back for action at the January 10, 2013, NRC meeting.

Director Creagh commented that the sale of surplus state-owned land in Marquette County will help Northern Michigan University achieve its goal of providing campus-wide educational wimax broadband service while accomplishing the department's goal of reducing its footprint.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

Commissioner **Steinman** reported that four new committee members were introduced and welcomed – **Tom Bailey, Julie Clark, Ann Conklin** and **Jefferson Gray**. **Steinman** said the committee adopted two resolutions in support of general management plans. Resolution No. 12-2012-01 was to approve the general management plan for Bald Mountain Recreation Area. Resolution No. 12-2012-02 was to approve the general management plan for Island Lake Recreation Area. **Steinman** said the committee also adopted six resolutions in support of six land use orders of the director. She said updates were given on Sterling State Park Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the 2012 Summer Youth Employment Initiative, and the Recreation Passport, and an overview of campgrounds in state forests was given. The January 11, 2013, retreat at the RAM Center was also discussed.

NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration

Commissioner **Wheatlake**, chair of the NRC Policy Committee on Finance and Administration reported that an overview of anticipated revenue for 2013 was given by DNR Finance Division Chief **Sharon Schafer** and representatives from the Michigan Department of Treasury **Dan Quigley** and **Greg Parker** presented an investment report.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner **Matonich** reported that he participated in a conference call meeting of the TB Advisory Committee December 17 along with two state representatives and representatives from the USDA. **Matonich** said work continues to eradicate the disease and make Michigan a TB-free state.

Matonich also advised that applications to serve on the Youth Conservation Council are underway.

Announcements

Richardson announced that the next regular meeting of the commission is scheduled for Thursday, January 10, 2013, at the MSU Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, and committees meeting will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee.

Commissioner **Wheatlake** made a motion to adjourn. The motion was supported by Commissioner **Steinman** and passed unanimously. The regular meeting of the NRC was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

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APPROVED: Date: _____

J.R. Richardson, NRC Chairman

Keith Creagh, DNR Director